

wherein [aid] said presenting means presents the items of information to an access device in order of ranking and enabling a user to retrieve each item;

wherein said feedback receiving means comprises means for enabling the user to indicate that user's interest in each retrieved item of information; and

wherein said updating means comprises means for updating the user's profile in response to indications of interest provided by the user.

Sub D2 40. A method, comprising:

storing a plurality of content records;

storing a user profile;

receiving a user request for content records;

relating content records with a stored user profile; and

presenting to the user the related content records[;].

41. The method according to claim 40, for providing information to users of a computer system, wherein:

said content record storing step comprises storing items of information in an unstructured database within the computer system;

said user profile storing step comprises determining and storing user profiles for users of the computer system who have access to the items of information;

said receiving a request step comprises receiving a request from a user for access to the stored information;

said relating step comprises determining [the] a user's likely degree of interest in items of information stored in said database, in accordance with that user's profile, and ranking the items of information in accordance with their determined degrees of interest; and

said presenting step comprises displaying the items of information with an indication of their relative rankings.

48. The method of claim 47, for providing a user with access to selected ones of a plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics that are accessible via an electronic storage media, where said [users are] user is connected via user terminals and data

communication connections to a target server system which accesses said electronic storage media, wherein:

said automatically generating step generates at least one user target profile interest summary for a user at a user terminal, each of said user target profile interest summary being indicative of ones of said target objects and sets of target object characteristics accessed by said user; and

said storing step stores said at least one user target profile interest summary in a memory.

49. The method of claim 48, further comprising the steps of:

enabling said user to access said plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics stored on said electronic storage media via said user target profile interest summaries[.];

said step of enabling access comprising:

correlating said user target profile interest summaries, generated for said user, with target profiles generated for said plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics to identify ones of said plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics stored on said electronic storage media that are likely to be of interest to said user;

transmitting a list, that identifies at least one of said identified ones of said plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics, to said user; and

providing access to a selected one of said plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics stored on said electronic storage media in response to said user selecting an item from said list;

said step of providing access further comprising:

transmitting data, in response to said user activating said user terminal to identify said selected item on said list, indicative of said user's selection of said selected item from said user terminal to said target server via a one of said data communication connections;

retrieving, in response to receipt of said data from said user terminal, a one of a target object and set of target object characteristics identified by said selected item from said electronic storage media; and

transmitting said retrieved one of said target object and set of target object characteristics to said user terminal for display thereon to said user,

said step of automatically generating comprising:

automatically updating said user target profile/interest summary for said user as a function of said target objects and sets of target object characteristics retrieved by said user.

50. The method of claim 48, wherein said automatically generating step comprises:

creating a customer profile, said customer profile indicating [the] a respective customer's preferences for data;

monitoring a history of data objects accessed by the customer; and

automatically updating the customer profile in accordance with the content profiles accessed by the customer to automatically update the customer profile to represent the customer's preferences.

51. The method of claim 47, wherein said method is for scheduling customer access to data from a plurality of data sources,

further comprising the [step] steps of:

creating content profiles for each data source of said data, said content profiles indicating [the] a degree of content of [said] predetermined characteristics in data from each data source;

[wherein:]

said [customer profile creating] generating step comprises creating at least one customer profile for each eligible recipient of said data, said customer profile indicating [the] a customer's preferences for data having predetermined characteristics;

[said monitoring step comprises] monitoring which data sources are actually accessed by each recipient; and

[said updating step comprises] updating, without input from each customer, each customer profile in accordance with the content profiles of the data sources actually accessed by that customer to automatically update each customer's actual preferences for said predetermined characteristics.

52. The method of claim 47, wherein said method is for scheduling customer access to video programs,

further comprising the [step] steps of:

creating content profiles for each video program available for viewing, said content profiles indicating [the] a degree of content of [said] predetermined characteristics in each video program; [wherein:]

[said customer profile creating step comprises] creating at least one customer profile for each customer of said video programs, said customer profile indicating [the] a customer's preferences for predetermined characteristics of the video programs;

[said monitoring step comprises] monitoring which video programs are actually viewed by each customer; and

[said updating step comprises] updating, without input from each customer, each customer profile in accordance with the content profiles of the video programs actually viewed by that customer to automatically update each customer's actual preferences for said predetermined characteristics.

54. The method of claim 47, wherein said method is for scheduling customer access to data from a plurality of data sources, [wherein] further comprising the steps of:

[said customer profile creating step comprises] creating a customer profile for each customer of said plurality of data sources, said customer profile indicating [said] a customer's preferences for predetermined characteristics of the data sources;

[said monitoring step comprises] monitoring which data sources are actually accessed by each customer; and

[said updating step comprises] updating each customer profile to reflect [the] a frequency of selection of the data sources by customers with customer profiles substantially similar to said each customer profile.

55. An apparatus [for performing the method of claim 47], comprising:  
means for automatically generating a user profile representing an interest summary based on a history of access to objects; and  
a memory for for storing the user profile.

56. The apparatus according to claim 55, for providing a user with access to selected ones of a plurality of target objects and sets of target object characteristics that are accessible via an

electronic storage media, where said [users are] user is connected via user terminals and data communication connections to a target server system which accesses said electronic storage media, comprising:

means for automatically generating at least one user target profile interest summary for a user at a user terminal, each of said user target profile interest summaries being indicative of ones of said target objects and sets of target object characteristics accessed by said user; and  
means for storing said at least one user target profile interest summary in a memory.

58. A system, comprising:

a customer profile, said customer profile indicating [the] a respective customer's preferences for data;  
means for monitoring a history of data objects accessed by the customer; and  
means for automatically updating the customer profile in accordance with [the] content profiles accessed by the customer to automatically update the customer profile to represent the customer's preferences.

59. The system according to claim 58, for scheduling customer access to data from a plurality of data sources, further comprising:

content profiles for each data source of said data, said content profiles indicating [the] a degree of content of [said] predetermined characteristics in data from each data source;  
wherein:

at least one customer profile for each eligible recipient of said data is provided, said customer profile indicating the customer's preferences for data having predetermined characteristics;

said monitoring means monitors which data sources are actually accessed by each recipient;  
and

said updating means updates, without input from each customer, each customer profile in accordance with the content profiles of the data sources actually accessed by that customer to automatically update each customer's actual preferences for said predetermined characteristics.

63. The system according to claim 60, for scheduling customer access to data provided by a plurality of data sources, further comprising:

means for creating a customer profile for each customer of said plurality of data sources, said customer profile indicating said customer's preferences for predetermined characteristics of the data sources;

said monitoring means monitors which data sources are actually accessed by each customer; and

said updating means updates each customer profile to reflect [the] a frequency of selection of the data sources by customers with customer profiles substantially similar to said each customer profile.

64. The system according to claim 58, being a multimedia terminal for receiving data from a plurality of data sources, further comprising:

means for storing at least one customer profile indicating a customer's preferences for data having predetermined characteristics;

means for storing content profiles for each data source of said data, said content profiles indicating [the] a degree of content of said predetermined characteristics in data from each data source;

means for inputting recipient identity information;

means for selecting different customer profiles which correspond to said recipient identity information in accordance with the time of day and day of the week;

processing means for relating said selected customer profiles with the content profiles for the data available from each data source to the customer at a particular time and for determining a subset of data having content profiles which most closely match said selected customer profile; and

a display guide for presenting said subset of data to said customer for selection.